16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

829
666 (the lower House of Parliament) every five. Candidates for the Dail occasionally visit Inis Beag to campaign briefly, but candidates for the county council seldom do because of the lack of interest shown in local elections and the small number of voters. In the last local election, approximately 60 of 194 eligible voters cast ballots, while the previous national election attracted slightly less than 100 voters. Two clerks from the island supervise the voting, which takes place in the school between nine o'clock in the morning and nine at night, five days before the rest of the nation votes. No more than a handful of the people are politically aware [521] and committed enough to campaign actively among their fellows. Political discussions animate the island a week or two before an election, but most of the people are poorly informed about the records and platforms of candidates and [665] parties. Estimates vary as to the strength of the parties in Inis Beag; Fianna Fail receives anywhere from 50 to 90 percent of the votes cast, according to various respondents, whereas Fine Gael receives most of the rest with Labour a very weak [177] third. The tendency among the folk is to vote party rather than politician, although the fortunes of Fianna Fail have depended largely on the popularity of aging President Eamon de Valera; "Dev" is regarded as "cute," not to be trusted, and vacillatory, but his fame outside of Ireland, which reflects to the credit of the nation, is the all important criterion of judgment among the local electorate. Some islanders have urged voters to interest themselves more in the local than national elections, arguing that many services and subsidies are provided by the county council, and its elected representatives can be "supervised" more closely than their Dail counterparts.

65 The local and national governments impinge on the lives of the folk most importantly through the many services and subsidies which are provided by agencies of the two bodies and implemented by visiting or locally appointed or hired functionaries. I have made reference already to certain government commitments: the language program and knitting industry, both underwritten by Gaeltacht Eireann, several of the agricultural measures supervised by Department of Agriculture representatives, the life saving company maintained by the Coast Life Saving Service, maintenance tasks performed by island men hired by the Irish [624] Lights Service, and the post office and national school. Mention also should be made of the doctor stationed in a neighboring island, the local agent of the Irish Transport System who oversees the unloading and loading of cargo shipped on the steamer, and the islander who serves in three capacities as county council agent, supervisor of road improvements under the Special Employment Schemes Office, and bailiff. As bailiff, he signs official forms for the folk, can take an offender into custody and set bail, and must sign a warrant before the police can make an arrest in Inis Beag.

625 There are no police, called *gardaí* and "guards," in the island, but three, including a sergeant, are posted in a nearby island and visit Inis Beag at least
674 once a month. Crime is virtually unknown among the folk, the few cases on record
[683] being for assault and battery and destruction of property; most cases are civil ones,
[684] involving property ownership and inheritance, and are tried intermittently by a
820 visiting magistrate. The guards are subjected to frequent criticism and derision,
625 especially when they come to the island dressed in plain-clothes to search for
[673]

[For information pertaining to governmental activities in Inis Beag, see category 657.]